

HEART HEALTH: FEBRUARY IS HEART HEALTH MONTH

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Chances are someone you know has experienced heart trouble or a heart attack. According to the American Heart Association, more than one third of Americans have some type of cardiovascular disease (CVD).

In one of the largest analyses of lifetime risks for CVD, researchers have found that middle-age adults who have one or more elevated traditional risk factors for CVD, such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, or diabetes, have a substantially greater chance of having a major CVD event, such as heart attack or stroke, during their remaining lifetime than people with optimal levels of risk factors. This information was published in the New England Journal of Medicine on January 26, 2012. CVD is also very expensive – together heart disease and stroke, hospitalizations in 2010 cost the nation more than \$444 billion in health care expenses and lost productivity.

“Prevention of cardiovascular disease is a lifetime opportunity for and a responsibility of individuals, families, communities, and the health care system. Cardiovascular disease can be prevented and controlled throughout the course of an adult’s lifetime,” said Susan B. Shurin, M.D., acting director of NIH’s National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute.

It is important for adults to know their blood pressure and cholesterol numbers, and whether they are at risk for diabetes. Additionally, you should understand the different approaches you can take to prevent or control your risks for cardiovascular disease.

Heart disease and stroke affects all of our lives, but we can play a role in ending it. Prevention starts with everyone. Protect yourself and your loved ones from heart disease and stroke by understanding the risks and taking these steps:

- Eat a healthy diet
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Be active for at least 30 minutes/day
- If you smoke – get help to quit
- Limit alcohol use

Please note: February is American Heart Month, and this underscores the importance of raising awareness of heart disease and coronary heart disease – the most common type of heart disease and the number one killer of both men and women in the United States. A healthy diet, thirty minutes of exercise/day, and a healthy lifestyle are the best weapons you have to fight heart disease.

The Bedford Board of Health offers free blood pressure screenings at the Council on Aging on the first and third Fridays' and the second Monday of each month, or by appointment.

Please call the Bedford Board of Health at 781 275-6507 with any questions or concerns.

Resources: www.heart.org

www.nhlbhi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/other/your_guide/living_well.htm

www.cdc.gov